

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 IGA-02 IO-13 TRSE-00 OPIC-03 EB-07
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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4478

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 2065

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SO
SUBJ: US/SOMALI BILATERAL RELATIONS: REVIVING THE DIALOGUE

REF: (A) STATE 263487, (B) STATE 299550, (C) MOGADISCIO 2035,
(D) MOGADISCIO 2009, (E) MOGADISCIO 1938 (B) MOGADISCIO 2060.

SUMMARY: FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, US/SOMALI RELATIONS HAVE BEEN IN THE DEEP FREEZE. THE GSDR HAS ENGAGED IN INCREASINGLY VITUPERATIVE ATTACKS ON US POLICIES AROUND THE WORLD, HEWING CLOSELY TO THE SOVIET LINE, AND THE US HAS RESPONDED WITH A VIRTUAL SUSPENSION OF OUTSTANDING OFFERS OF COOPERATION. THE CENTRAL PROBLEM IN US/SOMALI RELATIONS -- THE US IDENTIFICATION WITH PREVIOUS SOMALI REGIME, FRANCE, ETHIOPIA AND KENYA -- REMAINS UNCHANGED. HOWEVER, THERE ARE PERIPHERAL SIGNS THAT PRESIDENT MOHAMED SIAD BARRE MAY HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE SOVIETS' PENETRATION OF SOMALIA AND MAY BE PREPARED TO BALANCE THE ACCOUNT SOMEWHAT BY IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE US. THIS WOULD NOT BE EASY, EITHER FOR HIM OR FOR THE US, EVEN IF THE SIGNS ARE, IN FACT, GENUINE, BUT THE EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT THE TIME IS RIGHT TO EXPLORE SOMALI WATERS AGAIN. END SUMMARY.

1. EVER SINCE THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN PRESIDENTS FORD
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AND SIAD IN OCTOBER 1974, THERE HAVE BEEN TANTALIZING PROSPECTS OF IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE GSDR. THE US RESPONDED TO THESE PROSPECTS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, BY DONATING TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND TONS OF GRAIN TO SOMALI DROUGHT VICTIMS AND BY OFFERING TO RESUME US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ON A SMALL SCALE. BUT DESPITE LIP SERVICE TO IMPROVED RELATIONS BY SIAD,

AMBASSADOR ADDOU AND OTHER SOMALI OFFICIALS, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT STEPS ON THE PART OF THE SOMALIS TO REDUCE OFFICIAL HOSTILITY TO THE US. INSTEAD, THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY INCREASE IN ANTI-US VITUPERATION IN OFFICIAL SOMALI MEDIA, CULMINATING IN PERSONAL ATTACKS ON SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER FOR HIS ROLE IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN NEGOTIATIONS. THE GSDR HAS SUBJECTED THE US MISSION TO NUMEROUS MAJOR AND MINOR HARRASSMENTS AND MADE IT DIFFICULT EVEN TO COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS. SIAD LAVISHED PRAISE ON THE USSR FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DROUGHT RELIEF EFFORT AND WENT SO FAR AS TO ACCUSE THE US OF TRYING TO PREVENT SUCH AID FROM REACHING SOMALIA. (THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SIX DELIVERIES OF US GRAIN.) DURING THE LAST YEAR, ALSO, SIAD HAS RE-FASHIONED STATE AND PARTY STRUCTURES TO ADHERE CLOSELY TO SOVIET MODELS. THE NEW (SINCE JULY 1976) SOMALI REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY (SRSP) HAS ENTERED INTO CLOSE WORKING RELATIONS WITH THE CUBAN, SOVIET AND OTHER EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, WITH ALL THE IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE THAT IMPLIES. IN THE FACE OF ACROSS-THE-BOARD SOMALI HOSTILITY, THE US HAS VIRTUALLY SUSPENDED OUTSTANDING OFFERS OF COOPERATION AND ADOPTED A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE. CONTINUED ASSURANCES THAT THE US AND THE GSDR DESIRE IMPROVED RELATIONS HAVE NOT LED TO ANY TANGIBLE PROGRESS IN THAT DIRECTION.

2. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THE IMPETUS OF UN AND SOMALI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS HAS FALTERED, AND THE SOVIETS HAVE CONSPICUOUSLY FAILED TO TAKE UP THE SLACK. SIAD IS REPORTED TO BE ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN ARAB OIL MONEY AND WESTERN TECHNOLOGY. THERE ARE ALSO INTERESTING QUESTIONS ABOUT SIAD'S HEALTH AND EVENTUAL SUCCESSION. WE KNOW THAT SIAD HAS A HISTORY OF

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GASTROINTESTINAL AND OTHER EPISODIC PROBLEMS. HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE HAD AN OPERATION FOR THROAT CANCER IN MOSCOW IN 1976. EVEN IF RUMORS OF SIAD'S ILL-HEALTH ARE DISCOUNTED TO SOME EXTENT, THERE IS A HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF THE SUCCESSION QUESTION IN BOTH THE SOMALI AND SOVIET CAMPS. THUS, SOME CREDENCE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO REPORTS OF JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AMONG SIAD'S CHIEF LIEUTENANTS. THESE REPORTS CENTER AROUND FIRST VICE PRESIDENT LT. GENERAL MOHAMED ALI SAMANTAR, APPARENTLY THE RUSSIAN CANDIDATE FOR THE SUCCESSION, AND VICE PRESIDENT AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SRSP, BRIG. GENERAL ISMAIL ALI ABOKOR, THE CANDIDATE OF POWERFUL MILITARY AND CLAN FIGURES AND REPORTEDLY AN ADVOCATE OF A MORE INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY. THERE EVEN HAVE BEEN REPORTS IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS (UNCONFIRMED) THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PREEMPT THE SUCCESSION BY SUPPORTING A PLOT TO OVERTHROW SIAD IN FAVOR OF SAMANTAR. DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS, WHILE ADMITTING THE DIFFICULTY OF FOLLOWING THE SUBTERRANEAN POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN THE RULING MILITARY GROUP, AGREE THAT THE SOMALI POLITICAL SITUATION IS

SOMEWHAT MORE FLUID THAN HERETOFORE.

3. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, A NUMBER OF RECENT GSDR ACTIONS

RELATIVE TO THE US CAN BE INTERPRETED AS EVIDENCE THAT SIAD IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE HEAVY SOVIET PENETRATION OF THE SOMALI MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY AND IS INTERESTED IN REDRESSING THE BALANCE SOMEWHAT BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND THE US. THESE ACTIONS INCLUDE A) ADDOU'S RECENT CALLS ON UNDER-SECRETARY HABIB AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOLEN, IN WHICH HE VIRTUALLY PUT A PRICE TAG ON THE GSDR'S GOOD-WILL, B) A FORMAL APOLOGY FROM THE GSDR FOR A TENDENTIOUS ARTICLE ON US SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY WHICH APPEARED IN OCTOBER STAR OF NOVEMBER 17 (AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN WAS INFORMED THAT THE APOLOGY WAS MADE AT THE DIRECTION OF SIAD HIMSELF. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, AN APOLOGY WAS MADE TO THE FEDERAL GERMAN AMBASSADOR FOR A TENDENTIOUS OFFICIAL MENTION OF GERMAN POLICY), C) AN EDITORIAL IN THE SOMALI NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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NEWS AGENCY BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 5 WHICH COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON STATEMENTS MADE BY PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER AND SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT-

ELECT WAS OFF TO A GOOD START TO IMPROVING US RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD. D) THE GSDR'S ACCEPTANCE OF A US INVITATION TO NOMINATE TWO SOMALI PARTICIPANTS AT A USAID FOOD STORAGE SEMINAR AT ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT, THE FIRST SUCH ACCEPTANCE IN A LONG TIME, AND E) SIAD'S UNUSUALLY WARM RECEPTION OF THE AMBASSADOR AT A MASS DIPLOMATIC AUDIENCE ON DECEMBER 1.

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R 190800Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4479

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 2065

4. THESE THINGS MAY MEAN EVERYTHING OR NOTHING. IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THEY ARE COINCIDENTAL AND DO NOT REPRESENT A PATTERN ON WHICH THE US CAN BUILD. EVEN GIVEN THE MOST FAVORABLE INTERPRETATION, WE MUST NOT FORGET THE SOVIETS' CONTINUED HOLD ON THE GSDR IN THE FORM OF OIL AND MILITARY HARDWARE SUPPLIES, AND, FOR THAT MATTER, THE ELUSIVENESS FOR WHICH THE SOMALIS' ARE JUSTLY FAMED IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH FOREIGNERS. STILL, THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT SIAD WANTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE US AND WE SHOULD NOT LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH MERE INERTIA. MOREOVER, THE ADVENT OF A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN THE US PROVIDES THE OSTENSIBLE RATIONALE FOR A FRESH START IN SOMALIA.

5. WE SHOULD APPROACH THE GSDR WITHOUT FALSE HOPES AND WITH THE MODEST INITIAL GOADS OF FREER DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE US AND THE GSDR AND A REDUCTION OF ABUSE OF US POLICIES IN OFFICIAL SOMALI MEDIA, AT LEAST AT THIS STAGE. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT ANYTHING LIKE A REVERSAL OF ALLIANCES BY THE GSDR. BY THE SAME TOKEN, WE SHOULD NOT MISLEAD THE GSDR INTO BELIEVING THAT WE ARE BECOMING LESS INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND STABILITY ON SOMALIA'S BORDERS. OR THAT WE CAN PROMISE MORE, EITHER IN AID OR SUPPORT FOR SOMALI POLITICAL OBJECTIVES, THAN WE CAN REALISTICALLY DELIVER.

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6. ON THE QUESTION OF HOW TO SIGNAL THE US DESIRE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES A NUMBER OF THINGS CAN BE DONE WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY PARAGRAPH 5. (THE FOLLOWING IS INTENDED AS SUGGESTIVE.) WE PROPOSE THAT A) THE AMBASSADOR SEEK EARLY AN APPOINTMENT WITH SIAD IN ORDER TO OFFER US DIPLOMATIC HELP IN IMPROVING THE GSDR'S NONALIGNED CREDENTIALS, EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF TOO RAPID OR OSTENTATIOUS PRO-WESTERN, ESPECIALLY PRO-US, MOVES. THIS HELP WOULD ENTAIL SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE JOINT VENTURES INVOLVING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, US INVESTORS AND FAR INCREASED ARAB ASSISTANCE TO THE GSDR'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, AS WELL AS A NEW LOOK AT THE US' PREVIOUS AID OFFER, ALL IN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES. AS AN EARNEST OF THE FUTURE, HE MIGHT PRESENT (FOR LATER DELIVERY) A ONE-TIME PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE GIFT TO SOMALIA, PERHAPS A SCIENCE LIBRARY FOR THE UNIVERSITY. THE EMBASSY IS ALREADY WORKING ON A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES WITH THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, LABOR AND SPORTS, HIGHER EDUCATION AND CULTURE, ETC., WITH THE EXPLICIT UNDERSTANDING THAT, IF THE GSDR RESPONDS FAVORABLY, MORE US/ SOMALI INTERACTION CAN BE EXPECTED. AMONG OTHER THINGS, WE ARE TRYING TO DEVELOP SOMALI INTEREST IN A FOLLOW-ON CU SPORTS PROGRAM

AND AN ARRANGEMENT TO SELL SOMALI FINISHED LEATHER PRODUCTS AND HANDICRAFTS THROUGH US DEPARTMENT STORES. ON THE DEPARTMENT'S SIDE, AMBASSADOR ADDOU COULD BE CALLED IN TO RECEIVE A NEW READING ON US POLICY PRIOR TO HIS RETURN TO MOGADISCIO FOR CONSULTATIONS IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY. AND, AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME, A PERSONAL LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO SIAD COULD REESTABLISH CONTACT AT THE HIGHEST (AND, IN SOMALIA, THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT POLICY-MAKING) LEVEL. THE SOMALIS ARE A VERY PROUD PEOPLE AND WOULD BE PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO AN APPROACH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE US, AFTER THE GROUND HAD BEEN PREPARED BY THE EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT. IN ADDITION, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO SEEK DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FROM THE ARAB STATES (SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND EGYPT) WHO SHARE A COMMON INTEREST WITH THE US IN MOVING THE GSDR AWAY FROM THE SOVIETS AND WHO COULD PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CASH INDUCEMENTS, UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES.

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7. WE MUST ALSO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE GSDR MAY HAVE AS MUCH DIFFICULTY READING SIGNALS FROM THE US AS WE DO SIGNALS FROM SOMALIA. INDEED, DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE EMBASSY HAS NOTED SEVERAL INITIATIVES FROM VARIOUS US GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS WHICH MAY WELL BE INTERPRETED AS ILL-INTENDED AGAINST SOMALIA. US NAVAL PARTICIPATION IN KENYAN INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONIES ON DECEMBER 12, IN THE FORM OF PORT CALLS AND A FLY-BY, IS SEEN HERE AS EVIDENCE OF US/KENYAN MILITARY COOPERATION. THE DEPARTMENT'S RECENT REPORT TO THE CONGRESS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN MAY GENERATE CONCERN BECAUSE OF ITS INSISTENCE ON THE TERM "BASES" TO DESCRIBE SOVIET FACILITIES HERE. PRESIDENT SIAD HAS REPEATEDLY STATED TO AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN THAT ALL SUCH FACILITIES ARE CONTROLLED BY THE GSDR AND THAT THERE ARE NO RUSSIAN "BASES" IN THIS COUNTRY. ALSO, KENYAN PRESS ALLEGATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW SOVIET NAVAL BASE IN SOUTHERN SOMALIA MAY WORK TO OUR DISADVANTAGE IF THEY ARE PICKED UP BY US MEDIA. EVER SINCE THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT'S REVELATIONS OF SOVIET NAVAL FACILITIES AT BERBERA, THE GSDR HAS BEEN EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO ANY US ROLE IN PUBLICIZING SOMALIA'S MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON THE USSR. THAT IS WHY THE EMBASSY SUGGESTED IN MOGADISCIO 2035 THAT THE DEPARTMENT FIND AN OCCASION TO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF A NEW SOVIET NAVAL BASE, UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT BUR GAVO THAT WE DO NOT.

8. OUR PACKAGE IS OPEN-ENDED, DESIGNED TO BE SCALED UP OR DOWN AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE. WHILE THE US WAS TAKING STEPS SUCH AS THOSE OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 5, THE EMBASSY WOULD CAREFULLY MONITOR THE SOMALI OFFICIAL MEDIA AND THE QUALITY OF ITS CONTACTS AT THE GSDR. TO THE EXTENT THAT CHANGES FAVORABLE TO THE US WERE NOTED, THE EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT COULD BEGIN TO CONSIDER SOMEWHAT MORE AMBITIOUS APPROACHES TO THE GSDR. IF THERE WAS

NO CHANGE ON THE SOMALI SIDE, WE COULD RETURN TO A WAIT-AND-SEE
POSTURE WITHOUT HAVING LOST MUCH. WHILE IT IS LOW-COST, HOWEVER,
THE EFFORT DOES HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF PUTTING THE US IN THE
POSITION TO EXPLOIT ANY SMALL CRACKS THAT MAY HAVE DEVELOPED
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IN SIAD'S ATTACHMENT TO THE SOVIETS.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: THE DEPARTMENT'S GENERAL COMMENTS ON
THE ABOVE WILL BE WELCOME BUT WE WOULD URGE THE DEPARTMENT TO
FOCUS ON THE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS IN PARAGRAPH 6, WITHOUT WHICH
THE AMBASSADOR WOULD HAVE INSUFFICIENT AMMUNITION WITH WHICH
(OR, EVEN, REASON) TO APPROACH SIAD AFTER JANUARY 20.
LOUGHRAN

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